

The Underworld of Athens

As we headed to the Athens Metro, our desk clerk at the hotel said, “Look out for pickpockets on the Metro.”

“I left most of our valuables in our room safe,” I replied. “I have just a thin wallet and a cell phone.”

At the station, I slipped two euros to the agent and requested, “Two senior tickets, please.”

We descended to the platform as the next train arrived. “Look, how the cars are packed,” I said. Once on board, we stood, grabbing a post with one hand keep from falling and holding our cameras with our other hand.

A man spoke to us, “I need to get off at the next station.” Susan could not understand him, so I repeated what he had said and the man smiled at me.

We got off at the next station to transfer to another line. As we waited for the next train, I noticed something wrong and I exclaimed, “My wallet and cell phone are gone. They must have been taken on the last train.”

“We’ll have to go back to the hotel and call the credit card company,” replied Susan.

We returned to the Acropolis station and saw a police officer sitting with subway workers in a command post. I tapped on their window and gestured towards the police officer. He pointed across the lobby and yelled, “Door 2,” through the glass.

We stalked across the lobby and Door 2 clicked open revealing a rest room. We laughed and returned to the command post.

“A pickpocket took my wallet and cellphone,” I said to the policeman.

“You will have to go downtown to the Tourist Police,” he answered and gave me a slip of paper with the address.

Back at the hotel, the desk clerk was skeptical. “Going to the police is a waste of time. I waited at the stationhouse for an hour and a half to report my purse being snatched. The next day, I went to the police and told them that the purse-snatcher was right there on the plaza, but the police said there was no room in their cellhouse and they had no way to transport suspects to another jail.”

I waited two-weeks until our return from the Greek islands to file a police report. We boarded the Athens Metro to visit the Tourist Police. I brought no wallet or cell phone, just a 25-cent notebook, the size of a wallet in my shorts pocket. After the first leg of the journey, I remarked to Susan, “My two-bit notebook is gone.”

Susan laughed, “Well, at least, all they got was a cheap notepad.”

We continued on to the Tourist Police and found the office filled with elderly victims like ourselves. I completed a police report for our insurance claim. The desk clerk stamped and copied it and returned the original to me. I put the report in my neck pouch and we left to see the sights of the city.

Once home in Rocklin, I called our travel insurance company. “My pockets were picked on the Athens Metro. I have the police report. They stole my cell phone and wallet with thirty euros and tickets worth sixty euros ... and a 25-cent notebook,” I added.

“We regret your losses,” she replied, “but our policies do not cover cash, tickets or cell phones. We can reimburse you for the wallet and the notebook.”

“Thanks, but no thanks,” I chuckled and said, “Good-bye.”

Now you ask, “Do you have any advice for people going to Athens?”

“Yes, look out for pickpockets on the Metro.”